

THE IBIS.

FIFTH SERIES.

No. XIX. JULY 1887.

XXVI.—*Notes on Mediterranean Ornithology.*

By Lord LILFORD.

(Plate VIII.)

WE joined the yacht 'Glowworm' at Cadiz on February 8th, 1882, and after some ten days spent in our favourite haunts on the Guadalquivir, in pursuit of Bustards and Wildfowl of all sorts, proceeded to Gibraltar and Malaga. Our party consisted of Lieut.-Col. Irby, my eldest son, Mr. E. G. Peck, and myself. Before making eastward from Cadiz I was caught by my enemy and incapacitated even from boating for a long time; but during our stay at Malaga, which extended from March 1st to 16th, my companions were constantly out on the bay, and met with a good many birds—Gulls, a few Terns, some Skuas, great numbers of both the Mediterranean species of Shearwater, Scoters, one Diver, a Grebe or two, Razorbills, an occasional passing Heron, and an Osprey. The Gulls in the harbour of Malaga seemed to be exclusively *Larus fuscus* and *Larus ridibundus*. I find no note of having on this occasion met with *Larus cachinnans*, and, in spite of eager and constant look-out, we failed to identify a single specimen of *Larus melanocephalus*—a species, indeed, which I

have never had the good fortune to meet with on any part of the coasts of Spain. The efficient members of our party obtained a good series of Shearwaters, *Puffinus kuhli*, and a smaller species which appears to be now generally accepted as *Puffinus anglorum*, but is, in my opinion, a very distinct bird, intermediate in size between the two above named. Colonel Irby had the luck to wing a Skua with a bullet, the only bird of this family obtained out of some few seen, and brought it on board alive; it proved to be an immature specimen of Richardson's Skua (*Stercorarius crepidatus*), in the almost uniform deep brown stage of plumage. No Grebe was obtained by our party and but few seen: those few, from the description given to me, were, I think, without doubt, Eared Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*). Colonel Irby made an expedition by railway in company with Rafael Mena, a keen professional ornithologist (with whom I had had much correspondence and many dealings), into the Sierra in search of a nest of Bearded Vulture; but although they saw one of these grand birds, they could not discover this year's breeding-site, and returned with no prey but a Red-billed Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*), of which species they saw a great number. I may here mention that I have at various times received from Mena four young Bearded Vultures alive, two of which, taken from the Sierras near Malaga in 1878, are now living and flourishing at Lilford; one of these birds has acquired a certain amount of the tawny-red colouring on throat and breast, which is so characteristic a distinction of adult birds of this species in a wild state. Mena assured me most positively that although the young Bearded Vulture is generally hatched in February, it remains in the nest till late in June, though fully feathered and capable of flight long before that time. He is well acquainted with the Sierras of the neighbourhood and their human and feathered inhabitants, and in most years could command the produce of two or three cyries of the Bearded Vulture. It is remarkable that although almost every bird killed in the neighbourhood of Malaga, and intended for preservation, passes through Mena's hands, he had not, before this visit of ours, ever

handled a specimen of the larger Shearwater, though our gunners assured me that it was by far the most common of the two species above mentioned. The only species of Tern obtained was the Sandwich Tern (*Sterna cantiaca*), which was met with in considerable numbers.

We left Malaga on the morning of March 16th, in a heavy easterly swell with a light breeze from that quarter, and making but little way, brought up under the lee of a point of low land near Adra, in hopes of a quiet night, which, however, we failed to obtain. A Hoopoe boarded us early on the 17th, and we observed a flight of Cranes (*Grus cinerea*) making the Spanish land from the southward. We got our anchor about 6 A.M., and with light easterly breezes and very fine weather steamed into the harbour of Valencia on the afternoon of March 18th. I was still unable to do more than get up on deck and bask in the sun, and Colonel Irby was obliged to leave us for England, *viâ* Barcelona and Perpignan, but my Valencian friends made our visit very pleasant; and I made the acquaintance of Don J. Arévalo, Professor of Zoology in the University, a hard-working ornithologist and student of 'The Ibis,' with whom I had much pleasant bird-talk. This gentleman gave me a good deal of interesting information, especially concerning the habits of *Lusciniola melanopogon*, which is not uncommon in the marshes of the Valencian Albufera; he also assured me of the truth of a report which had reached me of the occurrence on that lagoon of *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. But this may have been one of two individuals of this species which escaped from the Royal Aviaries at Madrid many years ago, and which appear to have worked their way, with frequent rests, to the eastern coasts, as during my rides in Spain, in the spring of 1864, I heard, at various inns and ventas at which I halted, marvellous tales of two white birds, "larger than Vultures," and with "heads like horses," which had caused great excitement and consternation in the minds of the country folk of La Mancha, and along the southern side of the Sierra Morena. My son accepted an invitation to assist at the last "tirada" of the season at the Wildfowl on the Albufera on

the 24th, and, in spite of an accident to his gun, brought back thirty-four "fowl" as his share of the day's bag, consisting of *Anas clypeata*, *A. acuta*, *A. querquedula*, *A. crecca*, *Mareca penelope*, *Fuligula ferina*, and a fine adult specimen of the Common Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) alive, slightly wounded in the pinion-joint, which we added to our floating menagerie.

We left Valencia on the morning of March 25th, and steamed into Port Mahon, against a very heavy head sea, the next day about noon; there we were detained by a very heavy north-easterly gale which blew without cessation till the evening of 30th. The only birds noticed about the harbour were Kites (*Milvus ictinus*), an Osprey, one Buzzard (*Buteo vulgaris*), many Gulls, all of which were the Mediterranean Herring Gull (*Larus cachinnans*), and some Shags (*Phalacrocorax graculus*). We steamed out of the harbour on the evening of the 30th, with no wind, but a long rolling sea, passed through flocks of certainly some thousands of both species of Shearwater, at the entrance of the harbour, and noticed, some miles off the land, a solitary Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), to the best of my recollection the first of this species ever seen by us in the Mediterranean. Our destination was Spezia, and at noon of the 31st we made the high land of Asinara, at the N.W. extremity of Sardinia; the sea had entirely gone down, and the weather was bright and balmy. Several Redbreasts, apparently tired out, boarded us during the day, and on this day we met with the first Black-headed Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*) seen by us during this cruise. I am by no means inclined to enter into the never-ending question of scientific ornithological nomenclature, but I must make a protest against the obvious but almost universal misapplication of the English words "Black-headed" to *Larus ridibundus*, a species which at no period of its existence has any *black* about the head, and for which I venture to suggest "Laughing Gull" as a much more appropriate designation. "Adriatic" is, though not quite so inappropriate, a vague and unsatisfactory term as applied to *L. melanocephalus*, which is a common species in all but the extreme western

portion of the Mediterranean with which I have any acquaintance. To resume our story, we ran through the Straits of Bonifacio with a bright moon and perfectly calm sea, and at 1 A.M. on April 1st left off steaming, to give our stokers and engineer a spell of sleep, off the entrance to the bay of Porto Vecchio in Corsica. We got up steam again about 8.30 A.M., and had a delightful run along the very beautiful eastern coast of Corsica, our only incident being the purchase of two fine Dentici (*Sparus dentex*) from some Leghorn fishermen, whose becalmed vessel we overhauled and towed for several hours till off Bastia, and the weather holding calm, we anchored off the town of Spezia early on the morning of April 2nd. We remained at this most beautiful but ornithologically unproductive spot for some days, making a few excursions by land and water. The only Gulls seen by us in the harbour during this visit were *Larus melanocephalus* in small numbers; many of them had already acquired the full black head. We observed our first Swallow and House-Martin of the year on April 4th, but, with the exception of the Gulls above mentioned and two or three Cirl Buntings, not nearly so much as might be seen in almost any part of our own country by an observer of bird-life. We left our harbour under sail with a light head wind on April 13th, and beat into Leghorn the next morning against a very strong S.E. breeze; hence we made a visit to the Museum at Pisa, which I had missed seeing on a former occasion; some of the groups of stuffed birds are most admirably mounted, but as Mr. H. Saunders has given some account of this Museum in a former volume of 'The Ibis,' I refrain from further remarks thereon. The weather during our stay at Leghorn was extremely unpleasant, a strong wind blowing from all quarters of the compass, with cold driving showers. This state of things, and the fact that two of our party were invalids, detained us in this commodious but unattractive port till the morning of April 19th, when, with a smart breeze from N.N.E. and fine weather, we got away about 9 A.M. under steam and sail, and ran into Porto Longone in Elba; but as it looked unproductive did not remain there,

but ran round the south-eastern point of the island, and anchored in a fine bay with a few scattered cottages and small chapel near the beach at its head. The name of this place is given as Acona on our Admiralty charts, but is entirely ignored by the natives, who, so far as we could make out, are quite content that their habitation should remain unnamed and unknown to the outside world. This south coast of Elba is very bold and high, with finely and variously coloured cliffs, steep to the water's edge in many places, and deep bays with good anchorage and shelter from all but southerly winds. The hills are scantily cultivated, and, according to the very few inhabitants with whom we had any chance of parley, produce little but iron in abundance, a thin wine, and a few Partridges (*Caccabis rufa*). Our own explorations were almost exclusively confined to boat-cruises along the foot of the cliffs. Birds were remarkably scarce; a comparatively small number of Rock Doves frequent the coast, which is most admirably adapted to their habits; the ubiquitous Mediterranean Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola cyaneus*) here and there greeted us with his characteristic notes and actions of surprise and curiosity; a *Neophron*, two or three Falcons, probably *Falco puniceus* (of which much more anon), Kestrels, Crag Martins (*Cotyle rupestris*), a pair of Ravens, a very few Herring Gulls, and two Shags were about all the birds observed by us during our first day's examination of these shores. The absence of Gulls and other sea-haunting and rock-breeding species was most remarkable, and only to be accounted for presumably by an equally remarkable absence of fishes—a fact of which the natives assured us, and of which we were convinced, not only by the absence of fish-eating birds, but by the entire absence of Seals, for which animals these cavernous rocks seemed in other respects most admirably suited. We discovered the nest of the above-mentioned Ravens, but the rock in which it was built was so friable that I did not like to risk the life or limbs of any of the volunteer cragsmen of my crew by attempting a formal siege. On shooting a Rock Dove in one of the crannies of the cliffs to the westward of our anchorage, I noticed that three or four of the Crag

Martins, which were numerous and quite fearless of man, seized and carried off several small feathers of the dead bird, which were whirling in an eddy of air. On April 21st we saw our first Common Tern (*Sterna fluviatilis*) of the year, and discovered an eyrie of a Falcon high up in a rugged pinnacle of apparently ironstone crag to the eastward of the bay of Stella. The female bird only appeared once on our shouting and rattling our oars, and we marked her into her breeding-hole, but the Tiercel dashed about the summit of the cliffs, screaming loudly. I was sorely tempted to attack this nest, especially as I was becoming more and more convinced every day that these Mediterranean *breeding* Falcons belong to a race very distinct from what, for want of a better name, I must call the typical form of *Falco peregrinus*. To any one accustomed, as we are, to see our favourite birds on wing, the size is quite sufficient to satisfy us that here we have to do with a very different bird from the type just named. However, in this instance, the evening was creeping on, and it would have been impossible to land anywhere within at least a mile of the nest, so that the necessity of carrying a heavy coil of rope through matted scrub to a height of some four or five hundred feet, and the fact that we were running short of provisions, combined to compel us to abandon the idea of attempting a siege, so we ran round to Porto Longone and laid in meat, bread, vegetables, and various fishes, of which the best for the table was a Pelamid (*Scomber pelamitus*) of some three pounds weight. Porto Longone is an excellent harbour, well sheltered and with good and ample anchorage; but it seems that yachts seldom enter it, as our appearance created great excitement amongst the natives of the little town, whose inhabitants seemed to be chiefly miners and fishermen.

We steamed out soon after daylight on April 22nd, a beautiful calm sunny day, and steered for Monte Christo, a most picturesque, somewhat pyramidal mass of variously coloured rocks, of perhaps some four or five miles in circumference. The eastern face of the island is a sloping mass of grey slabs of rock with scanty patches of scrubby vegetation,

seamed with two or three water-courses ; the northern side is more steep, but cleft by a small cove, with a landing-place and a pathway to a large building at some little distance up the glen, which is cultivated and planted with vines, fig, and other trees. We lowered away our cutter, and rowed round the western side of the island, which is more or less precipitous. A small colony of Herring Gulls were apparently breeding on the flat top of a little rocky promontory, and circled over our heads with great clamour, two or three Shags dived before us, and two pairs of the small Peregrines showed by their angry screams that their eyries were in the crags above us ; a Blue Rock Thrush whistled from a crevice, and these few birds constituted, as far as we were concerned, the entire visible avifauna of the island. We went on board the yacht again off the south-western point, and stood away for the southern end of the island of Giglio, a high narrow mass of rock, apparently terraced with vines in every available spot, and dotted on the western side with white cabins. The southern side slopes gently, and terminates in a low range of cliff, at the western extremity of which stands a lighthouse. On rounding this point we lowered our cutter and explored a mile or more of the fretted and waterworn rocks. In a barren creek just below the lighthouse we found and shot a Green Sandpiper (*Totanus ochropus*), a mud-larker which seemed entirely out of its element upon the rocks, where a Purple Sandpiper would have been completely at home. In a pinnacle of jagged rock to the eastward of the lighthouse was a nest of the small Peregrine ; both the parent birds dashed about over us, screaming angrily, and the male flew off and circled round the yacht for several minutes. This eyrie would have been accessible to a good cragsman from above, but the shades of evening were falling, so we pulled on to the eastward, and shot a few Rock Doves from some small caves. The only other birds seen upon Giglio were a pair of Kestrels, the ubiquitous Blue Rock Thrush, a pair of Alpine Swifts (*Cypselus melba*), and a solitary Common Sandpiper (*Totanus hypoleucus*). We went aboard of the yacht about nightfall, ran over to the mainland, and anchored for the

night off Porto Ercole on the south side of Mount Argentaro. We remained at anchor during the next day ; our steward, on going ashore at the little town in the morning for provisions, was accosted by a lady who spoke fluent English, and assisted him greatly in his market operations. The only description that I could obtain from him of this most obliging signora was that she was "a real lady," with rings on her fingers, a crinoline, and silk stockings. Two of our party who went ashore for a walk in the afternoon described a pretty English-looking country, with a good road, fences of whitethorn, bramble, &c., and a profusion of wild flowers. This is a good anchorage in northerly winds, and we were assured that the southerly winds never came "right home," though our vessel rolled unpleasantly in a south-easterly swell through the night. A good specimen of the Subalpine Warbler (*Sylvia subalpina*, ♂) was picked up dead on our deck at daybreak of April 24th. At about 7.30 A.M. we got our anchor, and steamed away for Gianutri, about eleven miles from Porto Ercole, where we found a perfectly snug land-locked harbour in the little gulf of Palmatoja, on the eastern side of the island, which consists of low undulating country, thickly overgrown with scrub, and abounding in rabbits. We found a party of Neapolitan fishermen established in a creek of our little gulf, and purchased from them various fishes. Amongst these were a fine specimen of the Greater Forkbeard (*Phycis blennoides*), also some small fry, amongst which, with our infinitesimal acquaintance with ichthyology, we identified *Pagellus erythrinus*, *Muraena helena*, a very curious fish of the genus *Cottus*, and great abundance of small brilliantly coloured Wrasses, Blennies, and others. We found it very difficult to understand these Neapolitans, who seemed to have a great deal to tell ; but as the swell outside was too heavy to allow of a boating expedition round the island, we obtained most of our zoological information from one of the lighthouse keepers, who told us that as the greater part of the island was rented by some gentlemen of Leghorn for shooting, he was reluctantly obliged to prevent our sporting ashore. He also declared most positively and repeatedly

that the island was visited in the winter months by both Red-legged and Grey Partridges, neither of which species remained to breed thereon, that the scrub was infested by Wild Cats, that there was no spring of water, that he and his family were entirely dependent upon the clouds for their supply, and that the lessees of the shooting had turned down some Pheasants.

The only birds seen by our party on Gianutri, and not previously mentioned in this paper, were the Hoopoe, Common Redstart, Black-headed Warbler, Cuckoo, and Turtle Dove; the men of our crew found a few nests and eggs of *Larus cachinnans*; my son shot a very fine female of the small Peregrine, of which birds we observed a pair haunting the lower cliffs of the northern side of the island, where no doubt they had a nest. The lighthouse-keeper talked of some fine sea-caves on the western side of the island, but declared that no Rock Doves frequented them, and as the heavy swell which rolled in from the southward would have entirely prevented any exploration in a boat, we did not attempt to verify these reports, and on the evening of April 25th ran off and anchored off the little port of Giglio, on the eastern side of the island of that name. This port is only accessible for very light craft, and we rolled horribly all through the night, and at daybreak ran across to Porto San Stefano, an excellent anchorage on the northern side of Mount Argentario, with a town well supplied with all necessities. It rained in torrents all the morning, but cleared in the afternoon, and we went off in our steam-launch to see if we could find any passage into Lake Orbitello, a large sheet of water lying between the town of that name and the promontory of Argentario. A passage exists, but we found it barred with mullet-traps, so after coasting for a short distance along the sandy flat which separates the lake from the sea, we went about and ran as far as the heavy sea would permit past our anchorage and under the cliffs of Mount Argentario. We saw no birds with the exception of a Falcon, a few Sandwich Terns, and many Shearwaters of the two species. We remained at our anchorage the following day, as the weather was very

stormy, with a heavy sea running from the south-west. My son shot three of the larger Shearwaters from our deck. The weather moderated during the night, and about 11 A.M. on the morning of April 28th we started under steam and steered for the Straits of Bonifacio. A slight N.W. breeze induced us to make sail on rounding the northern end of Giglio, but this soon failed us, and about 4 P.M. we ran into the heaviest dead swell that we had ever encountered in the Mediterranean; this rolled in from the south-west, with a slight cross-sea from the north, and being unable to make any way against this combination, we bore up under the lee of Monte Christo; but soon after midnight a gale came down upon us from the N.W., and the island affording us no shelter, we ran back through a fierce cross-sea to Port Ercole and anchored. Making another start about 8 A.M. on the morning of April 30th under sail, with a slight southerly breeze, we saw a large flight of Cranes going eastward. A tired Swallow came aboard of us during the day, and several more of these birds and a Quail visited us during the night. The breeze failed us at about 8 A.M. of May 1st, at some ten miles from the entrance to the straits, so we got up steam again, and passing the islands of Razzoli, Santa Maria, Budella, and Spargi, anchored in the roads of Maddalena close to the town of that name, about midday. A strong easterly wind sprang up as soon as we were amongst these islets, and a Harrier, which we took to be *Circus cineraceus*, was all but blown foul of our funnel. The town of Maddalena is inhabited by a colony of Genoese and Corsican descent, who decline to be considered Sardinians, and call themselves "islanders," as they undoubtedly are. We rowed off to the landing-place, and were immediately surrounded by a civil but inquisitive crowd, who were much amused by our leaving the matter of supply to our steward, and cross-questioning every likely-looking lad as to their acquaintance with a Gull with coral beak and black legs. We could extract nothing positive on this subject or any other of zoological interest, the fixed idea in the minds of these islanders being that we had come to visit General

Garibaldi, who lay dying at his house on Caprera, which was in sight from our anchorage. The strong easterly wind which swept in strong gusts about the intricate channels amongst the islands made things unpleasant and prevented our doing any boating exploration during the afternoon. A few Herring Gulls, a Kestrel, two Common Terns, and some Shags were the only birds seen. We kept a loaded gun ready on deck in case of a visit from Audouin's Gull, of which we had impressed a description upon the minds of all our officers.

Early on the morning of May 2nd, having discovered an old shipwright who said that he knew everything, we engaged him to pilot us about the rocky channels and creeks of the straits in search of birds and nests, and started with him in our steam-launch to explore some little rocky islets in the channel that separates the island of Maddalena from Caprera. We found two or three nests of the Herring Gull on sandy spots among the rugged granite boulders of which these little islands are formed, each nest containing three hard-set eggs. Our old guide scrambled to one or two empty nests of the Rock Dove on the western shore of Caprera: a pair of Ospreys were constantly in sight, a Bonelli's Eagle hung in the breeze over the centre ridge of Caprera, Shags in all stages of plumage were fishing in every direction and drying their plumage with outspread wings on the numerous blocks and ridges of rock that crop up in many places a few feet above the water; and a pair or two of Common Terns hovered over the few sandy beaches of this rocky wilderness. The old native told us that many Shearwaters bred upon a small island off the southern end of Caprera, between it and the mainland of Sardinia, but did not hold out much hope of finding eggs, as the said island, "Porco" by name, is a favourite resort of the Neapolitan fishermen who frequent these waters, and is also, as our informant averred, infested by rats of such huge dimensions and ferocity as to make it dangerous to sleep ashore! This story naturally excited our curiosity, and we coasted along the shores of Caprera for two miles, startling some Barbary Partridges, *Caccabis*

petrosa, on our passage, and seeing a few Black-headed Warblers amongst the evergreen scrub which clothes the greater part of this wild abode of the old Italian hero. I may here mention that our old pilot, whose name has escaped me, but whom we named, I know not why, "the Trojan," told us that Garibaldi, who was in his younger days a keen sportsman, had turned out on Caprera goats, Pheasants, and several species of Partridges not indigenous to the islands, but could give us no information as to any results with regard to the birds, though he said that the goats had multiplied exceedingly, and were very wild and difficult of approach. He added that the General and his sons did all in their power to preserve the game for themselves and keep the island free from poachers, though they would readily give any English visitors free leave to shoot and explore. But I did not like to intrude in any way upon what proved to be the last weeks of the existence of the old soldier, and we did not set foot upon his domain. Porco proved to be a mass of jumbled boulders, attaining to a height of perhaps 70 or 80 feet at the highest point, with a little sheltered creek on the western side, of just sufficient size and depth to admit our launch. We searched every likely accessible hole and cranny, but found nothing except bones, feathers, and fragments of the eggshells of the Shearwaters; nor did we obtain a sight of one of the terrible rats above mentioned, though numerous footmarks on the small sandy patches bore evidence to their presence, and to some extent also to their unusual size, though it is difficult to imagine how they support themselves when the Shearwaters are away from home. I imagine that the four-footed vermin must cross the sea either to Caprera or the mainland, and only visit Porco during the nesting-season, though the Trojan swore by all his gods that no such rats were to be found in any spot in the straits but this. I may add that he distinguished these beasts by the name of "Pontici," and I much regret that we were unable to obtain a specimen. We returned to our anchorage by the channel between the mainland and the island of San Stefano, a high barren ridge of rock that lies between Sardinia and Mad-

dalena. On arriving on board the yacht, we found that the mate had killed a beautiful Audouin's Gull from the deck with a rifle-ball, at a distance, as he declared, of 300 yards. Be that as it may, the bird was quite undamaged as a specimen, in perfect adult plumage, but considerably smaller than any of this species that I had previously met with, and differed from them also in the colour of legs and feet, which in this bird were of a dusky olive-green, those of the former being almost black, with a trace of lead-colour. The Trojan recognized the bird at once as "Cirulia" (the common Sardinian name of *Totanus hypoleucus*), and said that, although a few of them frequented the neighbourhood of Maddalena during the summer, he could not be certain about ever having found their nests.

On the following morning, about 8 A.M., I was summoned on deck by the news that a "red-billed Gull" was hovering around our ship; and sure enough there was another "Audouin," with some dozen Herring Gulls, picking up the refuse of the crew's breakfast close to our stern. I sent for a gun, but though I had a very easy shot, somehow managed to miss my bird altogether. The morning was rough and wet, and as something had gone wrong with the propeller of our launch, we remained on board till about 2.30 P.M., and then went off in the cutter to examine the western side of Maddalena. This consists for the most part of cliffs of considerable height, with masses of huge rocks in the wildest confusion at their base; in one of these cliffs we discovered a little cavity, at perhaps a hundred feet above the sea, from which proceeded a loud and continuous screaming of young Hawks. On our firing a shot or two at the few Rock Doves that dashed out of the detritus at the foot of the cliff, a male Falcon flew out from a ledge above the cavity just mentioned, but we did not see the female bird. After surveying the spot as far as was possible from our boat, with a view to attempting an attack on the nest on a future occasion, we coasted the western side of Maddalena in a northerly direction for some distance. We shot another beautiful specimen of Audouin's Gull, but made no fresh discoveries, except that of a Raven's

nest, from which the young birds had apparently flown very recently. The Blue Rock Thrush is the characteristic species of these barren rocky islands, and during our boat-cruises in the straits, between the 2nd and 15th of May, we seldom passed an hour without having one or two Ospreys in sight, though we could not succeed in discovering their nesting-place. My son shot a third specimen of Audouin's Gull over the stern of the yacht shortly after our return on board about sunset. Some Neapolitan fishermen brought us an enormous skate, a shark (which I made out by the aid of 'Couch' to be *Squalus squatina*), and some very fine lobsters. On the morning of May 4th we went off early to the Falcon's cliff; three or four of our crew landed and managed to climb to a broad ledge apparently some 30 feet above the nest, and thence lowered a rope by which the old Trojan, after a rough scramble over the huge rocks at the cliff's foot, was easily hauled up to the hole. This from the sea had very much the appearance of having been made by a cannon-ball or shell, but was large enough to admit the head and shoulders of our cragsman, who came rapidly down the rope with two young Falcons, male and female, fairly feathered, but with a good deal of down still on them—in fact, in a state that a falconer would call just "fit to take." These young birds were, without question, of the race which Mr. J. H. Gurney has, in 'The Ibis' for 1882, p. 310, identified as the *Falco punicus* of Le Vaillant—a very distinct bird from the *F. barbarus* of O. Salvin, 'Ibis,' 1859, and the true *F. minor*, Bp. (*peregrinoides*, Smith), as quoted by Mr. Dresser in his 'Birds of Europe;' but in my opinion identical with *F. brookii* of Mr. R. B. Sharpe, and without doubt the Barbary Falcon of most, if not all, of our old English authors on falconry. My reasons for coming to this conclusion are the extreme rarity on the Mediterranean shores of the Falcon to which the designation of "Barbary" is now given, the comparative abundance of *F. punicus* in Morocco and the islands of the western basin of that sea, and the fact that most of the old authors who give any description of the "Barbary Falcon" pretty accurately point out the differences

which distinguish *F. punicus* from the Peregrinoid form with which they were best acquainted—that is, from what, for want of a better definition, I must call the *typical F. peregrinus* of Europe. Mr. Gurney, *loc. supra cit.*, has gone into such elaborate details on the measurements and plumages of the three races or subspecies, *F. barbarus*, *F. punicus*, and *F. minor*, that any remarks of mine on these points would be superfluous; and I feel that the best that I can do is to present to the readers of ‘The Ibis’ the accompanying figure (Plate VIII.) of the female bird from the nest on Maddalena above described. The original drawing was taken from life by Mr. E. Neale in the late autumn of 1884, and the Falcon, still alive (March 1887), has not materially altered in plumage from the state in which she is therein depicted. I may here mention that I believe that this form of Peregrine is the bird described by Alonzo Martinez de Espinar (‘Arte de Ballesteria,’ etc., Madrid, 1871) at p. 335 of his work, under the name of “Alcon montano,” and possibly also under those of “Alcon Bahari” and “A. Borni.” Of the first he writes:—“The Mountain Falcons were so called because they breed in the mountains: their colour is grey, variegated, dark spots: they are nearly of the size of the Neblies (*F. peregrinus*), shorter in body and feather, but very powerful; their temperament is savage and passionate; they are so full of spirit, that they attack any bird, however strong or large it may be; they should not be flown at what they cannot kill, for they become disgusted, and are lost; and if by chance they return to the falconer, they attack him or the Falcon that assists them, for they are of a very evil disposition.” The author just quoted gives, at p. 336, a concise, but very clear and intelligible, description of the Lanner, *Falco feldeggii*, under the name of “Alcon Alfaneque,” and of the Barbary Falcon, *F. barbarus* of O. Salvin, *loc. supra cit.* (Linn.?, nec Briss.), under that of “Alcon Tagarote.” Of the former of these two Falcons he writes that “they breed in Barbary, and many are sold in Oran;” and of the latter, that “they also breed in Africa; are of the colour of Peregrines, though the white of their plumage is somewhat *encendido* (warmed up), like the colour of *brasil*



E. Neale del.

($\frac{1}{3}$)

Hanhart imp.

FALCO PUNICUS, ♀

(rouge) ;” he goes on to relate that, though small of body, they are of such courage that one has been known to seize a Swan, and not quit her hold till the said Swan dived under water. I will only add that I look upon this little Falcon as closely allied to, or a subspecies of, *Falco babylonicus*, whilst *F. punicus* stands in exactly the same relationship to *F. peregrinus*. The subject of the figure was by far the most savage of the many young Falcons that I have ever had to do with ; and although her brother became perfectly tame in two or three days, she would always attack my hand in preference to the food that I offered her, and for many months showed an amount of ill-temper very unusual in the “generous” Falcons : her temper has improved with age, and she will now fly fairly well to the lure, but she will not mount high enough to enable her to take Partridges. This is probably the result of a severe attack of the terrible malady known to falconers as “frounce,” from which she, and her brother in a less degree, suffered on their passage from Nice to Southampton in the yacht. The male bird was flown “at hack,” and trained by the falconer of the Old Hawking Club, who reported him to me as exceedingly docile and very fast on wing, but he was unfortunately killed by a Peregrine before he had moulted. I have purchased a great many of this race of Falcon in Leadenhall Market, all of which were said to have been shipped from Mogador ; but although I have frequently met with the typical Peregrine during the winter months in the Mediterranean, the present is the only Peregrinoid form that I have personally found breeding there, and, from my experience, I am inclined to look upon it as the most strictly *marine* (if I may be allowed the expression) of any Falcon, except perhaps *F. eleonoræ*. I have found this race of Peregrine in Iviza and Menorca, and I obtained a fine adult male in the province of Santander in May 1876, this last being the only specimen that I ever met with away from the shores of the Mediterranean. Of many Peregrines obtained by us during the winter and early months of spring on the Guadalquivir all were of the typical European form, and of rather unusually large dimensions.

After this long digression I must return to the "Straits." After shooting a Rock Dove or two from the rocks near the Falcon's nest, we bore away to the south-west, coasting a promontory of the mainland on the eastern side of the Gulf of Trana; but finding nothing there but two Audouin's Gull, which kept out of shot, we returned and landed on the eastern side of the promontory in Agincourt Roads, at the spot where the telegraph cable from Maddalena merges on the mainland. Here we found nothing but a profusion of a very beautiful and sweetly-scented white lily, quite new to our inexperienced eyes, but probably well known to botanists. We then went off to a sandy beach on the mainland at the head of the roadstead, and explored a little marshy stream which there runs into the sea. The tamarisks were swarming with Turtle Doves, and we noticed many Water-hens, one Mallard, one Marsh Harrier, many Common Brown Linnets, a few Song Thrushes, Corn Buntings, and a fine adult Purple Heron, which fell to my son's gun. On our return we were caught in one of the fierce wind-squalls so frequent in these localities, and found that the yacht had dragged her anchor, and drifted into a somewhat precarious position; however, by getting up steam and with a hawser ashore and two anchors out, we made her snug for the night, and rode out a very violent north-westerly gale. The next day was too stormy for boat-work; two of our party, having borrowed an animal that its owner called "a most famous dog of chase," went ashore on Maddalena to search for Quails, but returned for luncheon without having found one of that species, the bag containing only a few specimens of a yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*), Common Whitethroat, and a Stonechat. I observed several Alpine Swifts hawking high over the town, and in the afternoon we found two empty nests of Blue Rock Thrush amongst the rocks on the northern side of San Stefano, close to our anchorage. Some goatherds on that island, however, were more fortunate, and brought to us a very perfect nest, containing five fresh eggs of "Solitario," as they call the last-named species; this nest consists entirely of fine roots and fibres. On the morning of May 6th the same boys brought

to me two nestlings of the Blue Rock Thrush, but they were much too young to keep, and the finders promised, for a small consideration, to put them back into their nest. We shot another Audouin's Gull from the deck of the yacht, and added the Common Buzzard, Cirl Bunting, Goldfinch, and Sandwich Tern to our list of birds identified in this locality.

On May 7th some Neapolitan fishermen brought us a very large Turtle (*Thalassochelys caouiana*) alive, which I bought, and, after various experiments in the way of feeding, at length persuaded to take fresh sardines and anchovies very readily. This animal was eventually domiciled in the Reptile House in the Regent's Park, and lived there in apparently good health for a considerable time. From May 6th to 11th the weather was so rough that we could do next to nothing in the way of boating; two or three more Audouin's Gulls were shot from the yacht's deck, but only appeared in couples or singly. We obtained specimens of the Black-headed Warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala*), Dartford Warbler (*Melizophilus undatus*), Sardinian Warbler (*M. sardus*), and Pied Flycatcher on San Stefano; also a nest containing four young Blue Rock Thrushes, of which the sole survivor is at my elbow as I write, and has for nearly five years been my almost constant and very amusing companion. Amongst other peculiarities, this bird, though it has moulted every year in August and September, and is in perfect health, has never assumed the uniform dark blue plumage of maturity, and is now (March 1887), slowly completing an abnormal moult into a still greyer stage of dress than that which it assumed in September 1886.

The morning of the 11th May was fine and calm, so we started early in the steam-launch to explore the Barretini islets, which lie a few miles to the north-west of Maddalena. On our way we stopped to examine a few heaps of isolated rocks, hardly worthy of the name of islands, lying a short distance from the western and north-western coast of Maddalena, and found several nests of Rock Doves containing eggs, several empty but fresh nests of Common Swift, and many young and a few eggs of Herring Gull, but did not even see

an Audouin. We found that some Neapolitan fishermen had harried the nearest of the Barretini isles, and we made out their boat off the outlying one; so we had to content ourselves with our luncheon and pipes, and the sight of many Herring Gulls screaming over their pillaged nests, whilst a Raven scolded at us from a crag, and the never-failing Blue Rock Thrushes piped their low sweet song. The next day we went off in a south-easterly direction to Capo di Ferro, on the mainland of Sardinia, but, with the exception of bagging one of four Audouin's Gulls, adding Grey Crow and Common Bee-eater to our Straits' list of birds observed, and the capture of a small but very brilliantly coloured specimen of *Zamenis atrovirens*, we did nothing. A small colony of Bee-eaters were at work on a sandy bank near the head of the Bay of Arraquena, but had not, so far as we could ascertain, begun to lay. The lovely weather and the fine wild scenery of the Sardinian coast amply made up for our want of success; but the main object of our visit to these wilds—*i. e.*, the finding of a breeding-place of Audouin's Gull—was still unattained, and as our time was drawing short and the eggs in the ovaries of the female birds shot by us were very minute, I began to lose hope on this subject. However, on the next morning we set off to explore the islands of Spargi and Spargiotto—the former, a high ridge of rock opposite to the western side of Maddalena, sloping gently to the sea on its eastern side, whilst its west front consists of high precipitous and jagged cliffs, the eastern slopes being thickly overgrown with scrub almost to the water's edge, with here and there a little sandy creek and small patches of coarse grass. On approaching one of these spots from the eastward, we became aware of a group of some twenty-five or thirty Audouin's Gulls clustered on the point of a little promontory; the birds rose and circled over our boat with loud outcries, somewhat resembling those of the Mediterranean Herring Gull, but more plaintive. I believe that we might have shot the whole colony, but I only wanted three to make up a dozen specimens, and these three were secured in as many minutes. Four or five of our party landed and explored the slopes of

Spargi in every direction to a considerable distance, but although they found some six or seven nests, nothing but broken fragments of egg-shells rewarded their search; we were not only baffled, but completely puzzled, as it was obvious that the eggs had not been hatched. None of the Gulls exhibited any traces of having incubated, and it was natural to suppose that had the nests been visited by the Neapolitans, or the two swineherds who were established on the island, they would have carried off the eggs without breaking them; besides this, we could discover no tracks of any sort about the nests but those of the Gulls, so that, literally speaking, the circumstantial evidence was favourable to the innocence of fishermen, swineherds, swine, and goats. Our old guide could not say whether there were any rats on this island, but declared positively that there were none of the dreaded 'pontici,' thereon; and *if* rats were the robbers in this instance, they must have been endowed with a marvellous power of leaving no footmarks on the sand, so we came to the conclusion that the guilt lay with the Ravens, although my own experience of these birds is that they usually drive their beaks into the thick end of an egg and suck out the contents without further breakage, as they fly. Our only plan, then, was to try and forestall these black thieves; and as the Gulls could hardly have finished laying, I despatched my captain with a boat's crew before daylight the next morning with orders to land and visit the nests as soon as they could see; but all in vain! he found the Gulls roosting on the same spot, but nothing more in the way of their productions, and a third visit to the spot proved equally fruitless; though the Gulls remained, and seemed very unwilling to leave the special locality. After our first search, as above recorded, we cruised round the northern end of Spargi, discovering a copious spring of fresh water in a little creek, and a Falcon's eyrie in a high crag, about which both of the old birds were circling and screaming.

Spargiotto consists of a pile of huge rocks which look as if they had been pitched one above the other by Titans at play; amongst these we found many Rock Doves, Blue

Thrushes, a pair of Ravens, and a Common Buzzard, but nothing new to our list. Coasting the western side of Spargi on our return to the yacht we discovered two young Shags which were unable to fly, but which beat us fairly in a long chase by diving under the launch when we imagined that we had cornered them in a shallow creek. These were the only two birds of this species we met with on this voyage that were not strong fliers. On May 15th I despatched our old native with a small collecting-gun, to obtain small birds and eggs; he brought back several cleanly-shot specimens of *Melizophilus sardus* with two nests containing hard-set eggs, and a Wood Lark (*Alauda arborea*), new to our local list. A boy brought off a cock Sparrow of the representative Sardinian species, *Passer saliceti*, alive. I only mention this because the bird in question has for nearly five years thriven in the classical gloom of No. 6 Tenterden Street, and, singularly enough, is the only individual of his race that I have ever seen or heard of alive in this country. A very fine specimen of Dusky Perch (*Serranus gigas*), weighing 22 lbs., was brought on board by some Neapolitans, who said that they had taken it on a long line off Tavolara. I bought this fish for 10 francs, and found its flesh infinitely superior to that of any Mediterranean fish, except Red Mullet, of which I ever partook. We spent the greater part of the 17th May in examining the skeleton and carrying off the jaw-bones of a huge whale which had been stranded some two years previously on the northern end of Maddalena, and had been towed to a sandy beach at the western extremity of San Stefano, where it was flensed by the people of Maddalena, and its bones picked clean by the Black and Griffon Vultures from the mainland of Sardinia. We saw several of the former and one or two of the latter species circling high in air, and a Raven or two, apparently unwilling to leave the spot that had, no doubt, savoury memories for them, and was, indeed, still redolent of putrid blubber. We left our anchorage soon after daybreak on May 18th, bound for Genoa, but on clearing Maddalena found such a heavy sea from the north-east, that I decided to run up the western coast of Corsica,

which I had never seen. Shortly after passing Bonifacio we ran into a dead calm; but in a very short time a fresh westerly breeze came up, we ceased steaming and made sail, but before we had run twenty miles the wind flew to the north-west, and soon hardened into a gale with heavy sea, so we ran in and anchored for the night in 8 fathoms, at the head of the Gulf of Sagona. The next morning, about 10, we left our anchorage under steam, and on clearing the bay found a light north-easterly breeze, which soon increased to a strong wind dead ahead, so that, having nothing particular to call us to Genoa, we shaped our course for Villafranca, thus making a fair wind of it. A weary Turtle Dove vainly attempted to alight on board of us, but must, I fear, have eventually fallen into the sea, as it would not trust itself down the wind. We got into Villafranca harbour about the middle of the night, and moved round to Nice on the following morning. I had not set foot ashore there since 1862, and should not have known the town again, so much had it increased in every direction; but I was glad to find my old friend Louis Galle, naturalist and barber, still alive and flourishing in his little shop on the Cours; he had a few locally rare skins of birds, e. g. *Falco vespertinus*, *Lanius minor*, &c., and assured me of a recent occurrence of *Sterna caspia* at the mouth of the Var. He also had several interesting reptiles alive, amongst them a beautiful specimen of *Coronella girondica*, which I bought and deposited safely in the Regent's Park Reptile-house on our arrival in London on May 25th. I may add that all the specimens of Audouin's Gull obtained by us in the Straits exhibited the peculiar coloration of legs and feet that I have mentioned above.

XXVII.—On *Horsfield's Woodcock*, *Scolopax saturata*.

By HENRY SEEBOHM.

SINCE I wrote my paper on the genus *Scolopax* (Ibis, 1886, p. 127), I have had an opportunity of comparing the type of *S. rosenbergi* in the Leyden Museum with two examples of *S. saturata* in the same collection, and I find them to be